

Northwestern University
Minutes of the Faculty Senate
Guild Lounge and Videoconference
March 6, 2024

The Northwestern University Faculty Senate held its standing monthly meeting on March 6, 2024 in Scott Hall's Guild Lounge and over Zoom videoconference. President Regan Thomson (Chemistry) called the meeting to order at 5:03 p.m. A quorum was present.

The president noted that the minutes from the February 7, 2024 meeting were approved electronically and entered into the record.

The president then began his [report](#).

The president said the Executive Committee met with University President Mike Schill and Provost Kathleen Hagerty for the quarterly summit meeting. He said the agenda included committee reports from the chairs of the Students Affairs, Research Affairs, and Educational Affairs Committees. He indicated that the Executive Committee pushed for more faculty engagement, including on matters that impact faculty directly, like CTEC revisions and graduate student unionization. He also noted that the Senate would like to hear from the legal firm Paul, Weiss once they have concluded their investigation and report on athletics, potentially holding a special meeting if the timing of their report does not align with the Senate's calendar. President Schill, he said, likewise gave an update on the Advisory Committee on Preventing Antisemitism and Hate.

Senator Seth Lichter (Mechanical Engineering) said it would be helpful to him, as a new senator, to have information on what the Senate has done over the past few years in order to better understand how it can improve engagement with the administration. The president said it might be a good idea to highlight the important Senate accomplishments over the past few years. He also mentioned that the Senate's website has [extensive archives](#) detailing its work since it was formed in 2011.

The president said he attended the meeting of the Academic Affairs Committee of the Board of Trustees as a part of the Board's winter meetings. He said he attended one in the fall as well and that the Senate President is officially an invitee to each of the Academic Affairs meetings. During the fall meeting, the president said Provost Hagerty made a vigorous case for the development of the Jacobs Center as crucial to furthering the University's academic mission (a \$10 million donation to renovate the Jacobs Center was made recently). During the winter meeting, he said there was a panel discussion with the chairs of the University President's Advisory Committee on Preventing Antisemitism and Hate and the University President's Advisory Committee on Free Expression and Institutional Speech. He said there are ongoing plans for the Senate to engage with both of these committees. At that same meeting, the president said Associate Provost Sumit Dhar presented a preliminary draft of the Academic Affairs Committee's updated charter. The president said each committee on the Board considered their charter after the Board's internal review was complete. He said he planned to propose the Senate's Executive Committee review its own committee structure.

The president said the May 8th meeting of the Faculty Senate will be held on the Chicago campus in the Simpson-Querrey Auditorium with a reception in the Simpson-Querrey Atrium to follow. He said holding a meeting on the Chicago campus this year was a priority. Many Chicago-campus senators had asked for such a meeting and he felt it would enhance interaction between the two campuses. The planned agenda for that meeting will include nominations for Faculty Senate President-Elect and, most likely, votes on 2025 Honorary Degree nominees. The president urged senators to attend in person if at all possible.

There were no additional questions related to the president's report.

The Senate then heard a standing committee report from the chair of the Student Affairs Committee, Senator Ana Maria Acosta (Physical Therapy and Human Movement Sciences). A copy of the slides is linked above in the president's report.

Senator Acosta said the Student Affairs Committee met with Vice President for Student Affairs Susan Davis in the fall. The focus of that conversation was student mental health and wellness. Vice President Davis shared a comprehensive overview of the resources available to support student mental health and wellness. Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS) has been expanded, both

more counselors hired and contracting TimelyCare, a virtual health and well-being platform. Accessible NU has also been stabilized on the staff side. Senator Acosta said the committee asked about student support following Hamas' attack on Israel. Vice President Davis said Northwestern has not had any serious incidents of harassment or discrimination related to the Israel/Palestine conflict. Senator Acosta said the administration is being proactive to ensure it stays that way.

More recently, the Student Affairs committee met with Associate Provost Miriam Sherin and Director of Undergraduate Education Lee West to discuss undergraduate advising. Senator Acosta said there are six undergraduate schools and the advising model is unique at each one. Some have faculty/adviser appointments, others advise first year students only. Advisor assignments could be cohort based or based on program expertise, and the student to adviser ratio varies across schools. Senator Acosta said they learned that there are special advising models for athletes, health professions, and international students. She added that the Office of Academic Support and Learning Advancement provides additional advising support for students who need it. Likewise, there are special enrichment advising services for fellowships, global learning, and undergraduate research. The Provost's Office, namely Director Lee West, holds quarterly meetings for all advisers. Senator Acosta said they also host three "lunch and learn" meetings a year and have workgroups for academic advisers and international students. The goal is to collaborate and share resources across the schools. Some of those resources include the [Faculty and Adviser Action Guide](#), a [list of the advising leadership](#) at each of the schools, and [ConnectNU](#), the latter of which is being currently piloted for faculty use in Medill School of Journalism with forthcoming plans to extend faculty access across all schools.

Senator Acosta then shared an update on the graduate students' unionization process: On February 21st, they reached a tentative agreement on a contract with the administration. The tentative contract includes an annual base stipend of \$41,000 by June 2024, increasing to \$45,000 by September 2024 (21.8% increase), along with an immediate \$1,000 signing bonus. The contract also includes 100% of premiums covered for dental and vision insurance, support for international graduate workers, and robust grievance procedures with new protections against discrimination, harassment, and abuse of authority. Senator Acosta said the graduate union will hold an online vote from March 11-13 to ratify the contract, the results of which will be shared on March 18. If a majority vote yes, the

contract is ratified and goes into effect immediately. If a majority vote no, the union goes back to the negotiating table and there may be a potential strike if no agreement is reached.

Senator Ezra Getzler (Mathematics) said one of the main questions last year was who would be included in the union. He asked if first-year students not yet teaching and not yet doing thesis research will be in the union. Senator Acosta said no. Senator Getzler asked if they will receive the signing bonus. Senator Acosta said she was not sure.

Senator Acosta said the Student Affairs Committee also met with the Northwestern Graduate Workers (NUGW) bargaining committee prior to the tentative contract agreement reached on February 21st. The main takeaways from that meeting, she said, were that graduate students are concerned about the impact unionization might have on their relationships with their advisers and possibly being subject to retaliation as a result. She noted that the graduate workers have been highly transparent about the negotiations, all of which can be found on their [website](#).

Senator Acosta noted that unionization has had and will have a big effect on faculty. She said there are concerns among faculty about the impact of the agreement, especially the stipend increase. She said there has been little direct information from the Provost's Office, in part because information was shared with deans who are supposed to pass it down to faculty. She said that process doesn't always work smoothly and that the Executive Committee expressed this concern to the President and the Provost at the winter summit meeting.

Senator Luís Amaral (Chemical and Biological Engineering) said there appears to be a lot of conflict among students about whether or not to ratify the contract. The sticking points, he said, are the amount of money for international student support and the dependent healthcare. Senator Amaral also expressed frustration about how unionization has been handled, sharing an example of a grant he's preparing for September 1st being sent back to him after entering the expected stipend amount of \$45,000. He said it is a huge problem if he has to find another source to cover the increase in stipend. Senator Acosta said the administration is being diligent in their review of the types of grants across the schools. She said they will likely still have the deans make decisions about how to handle the stipend increase.

Senator Barbara Newman (English) said the humanities students will be effected differently than the sciences due to a lack of outside funding. She said the word around her department for some time has been that the stipend increase will cause a reduction in the number of graduate students being admitted to their program, which will have huge ramifications on the number of courses being offered and the community graduate students build with one another. She said the new contract benefits their conditions as workers but might worsen their student experience. She asked if Senator Acosta had thoughts on that. Senator Acosta said the reduction in grad students might be the same in STEM fields as well. She said what she has heard is that everyone is assuming the programs will shrink. She said she brought this up at the summit meeting and there was not a direct answer on whether or not cohort sizes may shrink.

Senator Angela Lee (Marketing) asked how much the graduate students receive for their stipend currently. Senator Acosta said \$36,950 for a 12-month stipend.

Senator Jennifer Cole (Linguistics) asked, assuming the contract is ratified, if the new stipend will apply to all graduate students or only the ones in the union at the time. Senator Acosta said it will be for everyone across the board.

Senator Maria Dizon (Pediatrics) said that recently the residents and fellows have also voiced a desire to unionize. Senator Acosta said that is a completely separate process, but students are in close contact with other graduate student unions at peer institutions and may also have been in contact with residents and fellows.

Senator Amaral said that when he ran an analysis of faculty salaries he noticed that in some schools deans were not increasing faculty pay. He said that the same lack of concern for their faculty may result in less support for faculty in those schools, and that faculty are better off if they approach the problem collectively instead of school by school. He added that claims the sky will fall financially because of increased graduate student stipends are overblown. For example, the university already adapted to taking much less money from undergraduate tuition because of financial aid.

Senator Getzler returned to the topic of undergraduate advising. He said what he's found anecdotally is that students from other schools enroll in courses in mathematics for which they don't have the prerequisites, yet their advisers from those other schools are instructing them to take those courses, and the Registrar wasn't preventing enrollment. He suggested a central office advising students when they transfer into, or even enroll in courses offered by, Weinberg College of Arts and Sciences (WCAS). Senator Acosta said that contacting [Director West in the Provost's Office](#) was the way to go, maintaining that she is open to this exact type of feedback.

Senator Jacqueline Babb (Medill) said they would be happy to share with their advisers any departmental requirements.

Senator Mark Witte (NTE, WCAS) said the model in WCAS is to have advisers talk directly to the department.

Seeing no further questions, the president thanked Senator Acosta and the Student Affairs Committee for their work.

He then moved to the next agenda item, a breakout session on the following topic: How do senators envision the relationship between the Faculty Senate and the Board of Trustees?

The president shared a brief background on how the Senate has engaged with the Board since its inception in 2011. Namely, holding an annual lunch during one of the Trustees' meetings, at which there was a general topic of discussion relevant to both senators and Board members. The Board Chair also attends one Senate meeting a year and takes questions. The Senate President, as stated earlier, attends the meetings of the Board's Academic Affairs Committee.

Since the lunch is likely not going to happen moving forward, the president said he thought it would be useful to have the Senate consider alternative, and potentially much more substantive, ways to engage with the Board directly.

The president then introduced the following questions for each of the breakout groups to discuss:

1. What do we want from the Board and what do we think they need from us?
2. Is the lunch valuable, how might it be improved?
3. How can we more clearly present the concerns of faculty to the Board?
4. Are there ways we can do productive work together with the Board?
5. What are the relationships between the existing committees of both groups and are there opportunities for meaningful connections?

Following discussion, the president reconvened the Senate and asked to hear from a few of the groups.

Senator Tarita Thomas (Radiation Oncology) said her group wondered if perhaps there was a way for the Senate committees to speak to a small group on the Board about particular issues. The other approach they talked about is the Senate coming up with three to five areas the Senate would like to discuss on a more intimate level than the big lunch.

Senator Lichter said, in his view, the administration and the Board do not take the Senate seriously. He added that the word “shared” in the term “shared governance” rang hollow. He said if the Senate prepared a report card on the University President that was then shared with the Board and disseminated to the faculty, it would get the Board to take their input seriously.

Senator Caryn Ward (Medill) liked Senator Thomas’s approach, scaling down the size of meetings with the Board. Her group suggested committees from the Senate and Board meet to work on similar topics, potentially having committees present at Board meetings.

Senator Martin Lariviere (Operations) said he did not feel the lunches were the most effective way to present faculty opinions to the Board. He said the Senate should first ensure the all resolutions passed by the Senate are disseminated to the Board each quarter.

Senator June McKoy (NTE, Feinberg) said one member of her group brought up the point that the vast majority of Board members come from a corporate background. The group was not saying that

pejoratively, but rather that communication between the faculty and the Board can be difficult with these different backgrounds. Senator McKoy said it would behoove the Senate to gather data and metrics and decide as a Senate what is most important to the faculty. She added that sending resolutions to the Board is a great idea.

Senator Judy Rosenbaum (Pritzker Law) said that communication is the most important thing in any relationship, and that the lunches are a great place for that. She said she learns so much at Senate meetings about other parts of the schools. She said she would like nothing more than to share what she does as a faculty member and to hear what the Board members personally and also for Northwestern. This breaks down barriers, she said.

Senator Cole said the faculty don't have a real sense of what the Board's agenda is, and without knowing that it makes it hard to develop a plan for working with them.

The president said its clear the Senate needs to learn more about what the Board does and then rework its interactions with the Board based on the feedback from this meeting. He said he also has considered having a small committee of Board members and senators to come up with an idea for how to work together.

Senator Rick Cohn (Northwestern Emeritus Organization) asked how many members there are on the Board's Academic Affairs Committee. The president said he wasn't sure the exact number, but that there were around 7-10 members in attendance. Senator Cohn suggested maybe the Senate have a larger contingent (President, Past President, President-Elect) at those meetings.

Senator Amaral said he thought the Senate should be proactive in developing principles that define meaningful shared governance with the Board of Trustees and have a plan if the Board does not agree. The president said that is worth pursuing.

The president then held a brief discussion with the Senate on faculty surveys. He said the last full survey conducted by the Provost's Office was in 2015. It was created by a working group that included several faculty members. Last year, he said the Secure Faculty Survey Committee was reconstituted to address questions related to faculty surveys. That committee created an internal

survey instrument for assessing various aspects of the Faculty Senate with the goal of self-improvement. He noted that the current committee is looking to run a similar survey this year. Last year, the president said, the committee also considered the need for running a regular survey of the full faculty, and looked into two potential avenues: an updated version of the 2015 instrument run by the Provost's Offices or a survey run by an external vendor, COACHE (Collaborative on Academic Careers in Higher Education). He said there are advantages to both, but ultimately the committee decided to recommend the Provost's Office run an updated version of the 2015 instrument. He noted that the Office of the Provost has been actively engaged in significant efforts that focus on studying various aspects of the faculty, like salary equity and dependent care. However, the president said there does not seem to be appetite to run a full survey at the moment. He then shared some questions for senators to consider:

- Should there be regular surveys of the full faculty?
- Who should be responsible for these surveys? Provost Office, Senate, third-party?
- What should the scope of the survey be? Sweeping or focused?
- Who is the survey for and what is the outcome of the survey?
- Is there value in creating a small survey used only to inform the Senate's work?

The president then opened the floor for discussion.

Senator Amaral said he thought the Senate should run the survey and not wait for the Provost's Office. He said the survey should be short and focused, and perhaps the Senate could develop a suite of surveys that are run every five years. He said paying a bunch of money to an external source to run a survey is not effective. He said the Senate needs resources to do this kind of work and should receive them from the administration.

President-Elect Jill Wilson (Industrial Engineering) said she agreed it is a lot of money to pay for a survey. However, she noted that one benefit of the COACHE survey is it grants access to data from other institutions to use for comparisons. The president agreed and said one downside of COACHE the Survey Committee discussed was there is less room for tailoring the survey.

Senator Cat Fabian (NTE, School of Communication) said the Provost's Office is developing a survey of the NTE faculty. She said there is Senate representation and Organization of Women Faculty (OWF) advising that group. The president asked what the scope of that survey will be. President-Elect Wilson said the Provost's NTE salary study group created an NTE survey based on the Senate's own survey of NTE faculty run in 2019.

Senator Cohn said the issue with running a university-wide survey of faculty is that every school is so markedly different. He said that if there aren't school-specific questions then the survey won't be quite as useful. The president agreed and he said that is something the Senate should consider if it runs its own survey of the faculty.

Senator Newman said this discussion parallels the CTEC discussion i.e. it would be better if each school had its own instrument. She said she would be in favor of school-by-school surveys.

Senator Anne Zald (University Libraries) said she liked the idea of the Senate running a series of small, focused surveys over a cycle of years.

Senator Amaral wondered if the Senate could survey faculty to see if they want to be surveyed.

The president thanked the Senate for considering the topic of surveys. He then asked if there was any new business.

Senator Newman said she would like the Senate to consider the University's security policies at its next meeting. She said she had two policies in mind: the locked door policies on campus and the automated campus alerts. She said such things are terrible for the student's mental health and wondered how much generalized fear and inconvenience the faculty is willing to endure in the name of security. She said she thought Vice President Luke Figora should answer questions from faculty on that topic.

Senator Rebecca Zorach (Art History) said the Social Responsibility Committee planned to speak with Vice President Figora about policing on campus, but that discussion could also include security

if Senator Newman was willing to join them for a preliminary talk. The president said that is exactly how the committees should function.

Senator Bev Wright (Communication Sciences and Disorders) said that many people on campus care deeply about climate change and its effects. A group of faculty and staff on Northwestern's campus formed with the goal of coordinating such interests to prompt action from the administration. Those interested can read more [here](#) and sign up to learn more [here](#).

Senator Zorach said the Social Responsibility plans to meet with this group soon as well.

With no further business, the meeting adjourned at 6:49 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Jared Spitz

Secretary to the Faculty Senate